

Adlerian Psychotherapy in the Future

In the past, Adlerian psychotherapy was fruitful. It inspired most of the techniques and methods currently in use. Even today, it continues to be vigorous and effective. Its epistemological roots turn it into an updated theory that covers a large span that extends from Vaihinger's fictionalism to Piaget's constructivism. Its ethical and axiological conception is by no means the least of its contributions because, from the search for life's meaning to the feeling of community (*Gemeinschaftsgefühl*), both mediated by the power of will, it places man alone, standing on the razor's edge of loneliness and the need to belong.

With this wealth of practical and academic experience, we should undertake a revision of Adlerian's contributions in a century, and the development that other psychotherapies have had on their own. And postulate our own developments. We shall find convergences and divergences. We should envision a new model that aims at constant change, but maintaining the need for fixed points. With this metaphor we should be able to use the lever that Archimedes requested to move the world.

After an extensive period of conditioning imposed by fashion dictates that posed as scientific but left us helpless to cope with anxiety and the lack of real company and senselessness, we must understand once more that "everything can be otherwise". Changes and new developments in genetics and environmental control lead us to design methods that use our maximum creative power, while climate change is a non-plastic reality, and genetics constantly tells us "*memento homo*". We are faced with the challenge of renewing therapy, depth, holistic, theological, axiological and positive that places us with courage in a range of techniques and methods already under construction.

In the future, our psychotherapy will have, as it does now but with greater emphasis, its roots in affection and commitment to promote a "*vita nova*" as I would like to call it out of love of Dante from whom I choose two particular metaphors. One is the torment of Paolo and Francesca, victims of the lack of gravity that impedes them from coming closer; the other is the one of those indifferent who must parade behind a blank banner due to their lack of commitment. I am referring to political commitment in the Aristotelic sense of the ***zoon politikon***..

This does not imply falling into an epistemological rationalism already deceased, but instead considering the Adlerian idea of collaboration. Ansbacher has reminded us that Adler, in the Psychoanalytical Association of the city that hosts us today, declared Marx to be the first social psychologist, and his trust in him from the sociological, but not the economical, viewpoint. Marx said that philosophers used to interpret the world and that philosophy today must be useful for changes. The therapists and consultants that will substitute us must be capable of promoting a change in lifestyle and a change in society where Darwinian and Hegelian postures harmonize. Without disregarding simple or complex psychopathologies, each lifestyle is personal, unparalleled and unique, as Bernstein exemplified in the prologue to the

Spanish version of "Über den Nervösen Charakter". Accepting that the world is diversity we will learn respect and tolerance among individuals and nations, as was Dreikus' concern towards the end of his life. Because after all a country's lifestyle depends on the lifestyle of its people who, in part consciously and in part unconsciously choose their leaders or allow them to remain in power. Power according to the effective expression of Rollo May, undoubtedly influenced by Adler, is the capacity to undertake change or impede it. "Power" and "sense of community" are the poles of an axis of which we will never be able to do without. In the same way that it will be a more difficult task, in what regards depth psychology, to discover unconscious goals faced by an excess of stimuli. But let us be optimistic, together with Ortega y Gasset, when he says: "It is only possible to perceive something when seen from afar".

Let us use etymology again. The Greek word *idiotes*, translated as "idiot" described he who did not take part in matters of state. Adlerians must be and must continue to be generous and full of humor and social interest.

The importance of affection linked to cognition will be one of the main characteristics. For a long time we have known that memory without feeling disappears. Even Freud coincides with Adler here in the sentimental selection of memories. Extreme cognitivism is a revision of the gnostic heresy that postulated that God could be reached through information, to put it in modern terms. What the individual wants is taken into consideration here.

In our age, more technological than scientific, we recall the dialogue between Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoire, when the latter, faced by the anguish of his mother's death, says that science has defeated her, to which Sartre responds: No, you have been defeated by technology. The therapists of the future cannot remain distanced from technology and will necessarily revise their techniques. In the words of Künkel "a sole technique is a technical mistake".

We must continue to bear in mind Anatole France's speech, when addressing the young and says that he is convinced that "Pantagruelism is the best philosophy because it is founded on both poles of the human soul, science and love". The same will occur with our psychology, continuously updated.

David Ausubel nowadays postulates "significant learning", which implies that it has a meaning for each pupil. Sometimes, when students talk to their teachers outside the classroom, they say "what you taught doesn't say anything to me". Future, deeply rooted Adlerian therapies will have Virgil's verse: "*Omnia vincunt amor*" (love conquers all) very present.

Creativity (in Greek *poiesis*), in the same way that it leads us to choose a lifestyle, must lead us to choose the therapeutic tool-box of the future. I am not verifying out of empathy with the Greeks who said that Clio, the muse of history, was the least serious of all muses. This fact is known by all Adlerians because we know that memories change with time and with psychotherapy. I recur to my memory to share a non-verified memory of my adolescence. It's about the movie Alphaville by Goddard. There, in an environment isolated from the outside world, a visitor comes and finds a dictatorship of technology. The hotel guest is informed that someone has gone to prison because he cried at a friend's wake. The expression of feelings is forbidden.

Every day a bible is placed on people`s night tables, which is, in reality, a dictionary. All the admitted words and concepts are there. The word conscious is missing, which is an object of speculation among the rebels. The following day the computer questions or performs a psycho-diagnosis of the outsider, and the final question is “What makes night turn into day?” To which the outsider answers “Poetry”. The computer goes crazy, claiming that this answer is not programmed and cannot be processed...

The feeling of community (*Gemeinschaftsgefühl*) is the *charitas* of the Latins and the *ágape* of the Greeks. This is the most important virtue according to Saint Paul, more important than faith and hope. And at the time of diagnosis, as provisional categories, or mere metaphors of “a process that can be guessed but never understood” according to Künkel`s sound statement. In our days, where labels of narcissistic disorders and megalomaniacs thrive, who can question that behind all this there exists a lack of feeling of community and an increase of the feeling of inferiority?

Many times megalomania is based on an esthetic feeling. In the same way that Otto Rühle was concerned about social inferiority, so important in this age where the excluded increase in number and we have the commitment to include them, by recurring to our creativity. We can take into account that Zurrón discussed ugliness as that “not so bitter gift”, and explained that no ugliness goes unrewarded.

In our post-modern societies, with an ever increasing number of criminals, we can agree with Adler that felons, besides lacking a feeling of community, are cowards and attack the weakest or most unprepared. Here Adler`s statement is confirmed: “All neurosis is cowardice”. We therefore agree with Bottome the biographer: “If someone wishes to avoid certain responsibilities they turn neurotic”. If one wants to avoid all responsibilities, one turns psychotic or criminal or psychopathic or antisocial. There is no better way to evidence that Adlerian psychology has the mission of prevention through education. And here we find that teachers –and I am one of them– are some of the most conservative individuals. Paulo Freire noted that the drama of the conservatives is that they cannot conceive that things can be better. That means to say that they contradict our golden rule of “everything can be otherwise”. It will be an inescapable mission to teach together with Gide, cited by Saint Exupery, that: “happiness does not reside in freedom, but in the acceptance of a duty”. Once again we will reinforce Adler`s apotegma: “Adler freed man from causality and taxed him with responsibility”. We are as responsible for what happens within us as in our environment. For example bioethics has showed us that global warming is a product of our selfishness and consumerism. Some years ago the economist René Dumont wrote that our “society has gone wild and has lost control of its consumer model, whose stupidest manifestation is the individual car”.

There is a new concept in psychology that has much future, resilience. It deals with the responsible adult lending his support, unconditionally and affectionately, to the assaulted and abused, who in spite of these stigmas can insert in and contribute to society. The Adlerians of the future will be willing to help and to multiply resilience, because we know that today`s neurotic is the son of yesterday`s neurotic. This leads us to the issue of the distribution of knowledge and of wealth, which is equivalent to the sharing of power.

Tagore has a poem that shows us the misery of the rich when he more or less says: "The boy dressed as a prince loses his taste in playing because his attire hinders his every step; does he gain something by being a slave to that luxury that keeps him from the healthy dirt of the earth, that impedes him from entering the great banquet of life of all men?"

In the psychosis of our society we find families with only-children which in turn have only-children, where learning to share or to live together is absent: another of the challenges of the future that we must start solving in the present. He who has no children can be the father of many. There is more merit there than in passing on his own limited genes...

All of this must be undertaken with humor. Let us remember that Adler died with the idea of writing about "therapeutic jokes", an idea which was picked up by Michael Titz in his eloquent construct of gelotofobia and his very Adlerian psychotherapy of humor-drama. I recall France: "The more I think of human life the more I believe that mercy and irony should be witnesses and judges".

Some came to think that Adlerian psychology would disappear in the previous century through dissemination. They implied that it was so obvious that its contributions would be taken up by others to such an extent that their origins would become unknown. Like in that melody Ellenberger spoke of when the author asks who it belongs to, the answer is it belongs to folklore, nobody invented it. It confirms Adler's prophetic words: "Individual psychology will gain many followers even without knowing the name of its founders". In this centennial moment, ennobled as aged wine, our psychology reinforces its identity and respectfully prepares the future to know and to teach who is who.

From now on, with our teleological position, with precedents in Kant's philosophy, we can better understand why Lot's wife turned into a salt statue by looking back. Vaihinger's contribution comes to our aid; from fictionalism he provided epistemological support for "The neurotic character", also centennial today and which constitutes the identity of our scientific stance in the face of diversity of thought. This construct will continue to be accompanied by holism. Taragano, a philosopher from a country neighboring mine, says that "a century is but a whim of the decimal system, but it is not a whim without consequences [...] The XX century created a new world which will expand in the decades to come". Malraux in his "Antimemories" sentenced that "'Never had the earth been transformed to such an extent in a century [...] I have met the sparrows that awaited the street-car horses in the Palais Royal, and the shy and enchanting Commander Glenn returning from the cosmos". We got to see him return to the cosmos an old man from decaying empires...

Taragano insists on the heroic side of science under the shadow of Malraux who says that this philosopher-writer sought in vain for a contemporary Buddha or Mohamed. He forgot to take into account that it was precisely Adler who, in the West, showed us an optimistic and open path which, regarding transcendence is and will be capable of forming a new man and a new humanity.

Also, in the midst of so much information, we must, for the purposes of selecting and understanding, recur to common sense. It has been said that in one of Adler's

conferences someone declared that everything he had said was “common sense”, to which Adler replied: “And what’s wrong with common sense?”

Adler maintained “equality among men”, there is no difference between democracy and socialism. We cannot conceive one construct without the other. Since Watson and Crick discovered the structure of DNA in 1953, we know that the genes of a horse and those of a man differ only by the way the nucleotides are aligned on the DNA. Philip Handler teaches us in “Biology and the future of humanity” that “there is only one form of life on earth”. Scientific disciplines will be as they were for our psychology, inseparable, but with greater efficiency and cooperation. In this holism, physics and chemistry are inseparable only at a very low level of abstraction. Once again Taragano points out that “cellular biology is inseparable from chemistry... this mutual dependence not only happens among science; theology, ethics and metaphysics discover themselves to be linked to genetics”. But the creativity we all carry within has allowed us to alter innate characteristics. Our power of manipulation has stopped belonging to pure fiction.

Our position is very different if we view it from the pessimistic side that makes us see, pushed by the past, victims of the environment or of heredity. That is one of the challenges of the future Adlerians, to show that man can be free and that, even in the worst of circumstances, has capacity to choose. Of course this implies increased courage. Encouragement will continue to be our greatest task. Once again new generations will find the answer there to the meaning of life, as was correctly envisioned by Adler in a book that carries the same title: “The meaning of life”.

Let us recall that in the first years of his career, Adler was dedicated to the concept of organic inferiority and moved through social inferiority towards a system which was broader and more humane, and took shape in a book he wrote with a Lutheran pastor, where the curing of souls and individual psychology are compared.

We ourselves and those who follow will have to preach with our example the feeling of community, and let it be said of the Adlerians as was said of the first Christians: “See how they love each other”. It’s the best way to find the useful side of life as an antidote to neurosis, psychosis and psychopathies. Let us consider a perversion that scandalizes the world, pedophilia. It is nothing but a stagnation in the infant situation, as Adler pointed out when referring to psychoanalytical transfer; it is also a problem of cowardice, of power, of feelings of inferiority and of lack of sense of community. Instead of judging, which is not the task of psychotherapists, let us contribute to the change of that lifestyle and in the insertion into society. Here too they will be capable of teaching to make amends and to contribute.

Most importantly, the future Adlerian therapy will be rid of sectarianism and of orthodoxies; that is way I wish to conclude with the words of a scholar of my country, Rodó, in his parable Gorgias’ farewell who, as Socrates, is a man that does not belong to his time –he is ahead of it– and therefore deserves to die. He was given to choose his death and he chose Socrates’. At sunset, he drank hemlock comforted by the words of his disciple Leucipo: “If one of your words is made to sound fake, if seeing where you did not see, we shall understand what it is to conquer you; to him, to whom shall defeat you honouring us”.

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