

Adler and Dreikurs: Cognitive-Social Dynamic Innovators

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Abstract

The author focuses on the unique and pioneering work of Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs and includes clarifications of Dreikurs as a therapist and teacher. Certain aspects have set *Individual Psychology* apart from other theories, and the author discusses issues that are crucial both for psychology and for society in the new millennium. The author discusses Dreikurs's emphases on social equality as an extension of the concept of social interest and community feeling; the importance of the group and group processes as extensions of the concept of holism and as providing the necessary context for understanding and changing an individual's short-term and long-term goals; and the importance of private logic and the identification of mistaken beliefs and apperceptions.

Adler and Dreikurs were psychiatrists in the early decades of the twentieth century. Although their professional careers were spent in treating patients, their aims were to help not only individuals but also the larger community. Moreover, their medical work in treating patients was based on an educational model. They were unusually sensitive clinicians as well as highly effective teachers. At the start of a new millennium, Adler's and Dreikurs's psychological insights are still in many ways ahead of their time (Ferguson, 2000a, 2000b). Unfortunately, still today their insights are often not well understood.

In seeking to help their patients, Adler and Dreikurs realized the need for more broadly improved human relationships in the larger community. They sought to help not only the individual patient but also human beings in general. Their work applied to psychiatry and education and to human relationships in all spheres of life, including the family and the workplace (Ferguson, 1996a, 1999b). This breadth permitted wide applications but also many occasions for criticism.

Adler and Dreikurs as persons, not only their writings, received criticism. As individuals they were often misunderstood. In the case of Adler, criticism occurred in part because he made major changes in the evolution of his own theory (Ferguson, 1989, 1999a) and in part because he did not formulate a systematic and integrated summary or compilation of his ideas. In the case of Dreikurs, criticism occurred in part because he espoused ideas and methods that contradicted the dominant ideas and methods of his time

and in part because erroneous conclusions could be drawn when only limited portions of his work are sampled. To appreciate the full depth and breadth of his ideas, one has to read and view a large amount of his written and videotaped work. Dreikurs wrote on a wide range of topics and the finest of his clinical procedures need to be seen over many videotapes.

Adler and Dreikurs projected forceful personalities but they were also exceedingly humane, kind, and generous, and their conceptualizations and methods were rich in insights. These insights contrasted with ideas then currently espoused, and rejection of these ideas often became confounded with rejection of the person as well as his ideas.

Other criticisms have been leveled. One type concerns the issue of depth versus superficiality in their treatment methods. Some who call themselves "depth psychologists" consider the theory and methods of Adler and Dreikurs as too superficial, yet others, such as cognitive behavioral therapists, view them as too dynamic, too concerned with inner motivation. In this article I address several issues relevant to such criticisms.

One's judgment of a theory is contextually influenced by the *Ortgeist* and *Zeitgeist* (Wertheimer, 2000), and whether Individual Psychology is judged as too superficial or too dynamic hinges in part on political and economic factors rather than on scientific merit and validity. It is relevant to note that payment for therapy by governmental or private health insurance companies is contingent in some countries on how "deep" the treatment is and in other countries on how "brief" and focused it is. Insurance companies are known to drive some of the methods used for patient treatments. Whereas in some European countries insurance companies decree that the treatment must represent "depth" in order that the provider receive insurance payments, in some areas of North America the treatment has to be "brief." Brief treatments often involve behavioristic formulas. Thus, politico-economic considerations can influence judgment of a theory. Additionally, serious theoretical concerns have been raised by those favoring a psychoanalytic perspective, which for them represents depth, and by those favoring a behavioristic perspective, which for them involves a scientific (objective) basis they consider to be absent in the more dynamic approaches.

A fuller discussion of the merits of what constitutes depth and how depth compares with objective behavioral treatments follows a consideration of important ways in which Adler's and Dreikurs's ideas are still ahead of their time and ways in which aspects of contemporary psychology are converging toward the formulations of Adler and Dreikurs (Ferguson, 2000a, 2000b).

Important Concepts Related to Contemporary Psychology

Normative Values: Social Interest and Social Equality. One example of the far-sightedness of Adler and Dreikurs is their innovative social-cognitive

motivational approach. They emphasized social value at a time when mechanistic biological concepts were championed in psychology. Adler and Dreikurs were notable with their social, transactional, moral, and cognitive concepts. Although some functionalists (e.g., Dewey, 1922) in the early part of the twentieth century sought to build a psychology that included value, these formulations did not include insights about psychopathology, personal dynamics, and personality development as did the writings of Adler and Dreikurs. By uniquely and innovatively integrating the importance of social values into a theory of personality and personal dynamics, Adler and Dreikurs dealt effectively with issues of the individual in therapy as well as in school, family, and the workplace.

After a long period of neglect regarding social values, recent social psychological theorists (e.g., Feather, 1988, 1992, 1995; Klinger, 1992; Schwartz, 1992, 1997) have moved toward greater consideration of the role of individual concerns and values in individual dynamics and actions. Their formulations differ from the concepts and methods developed by Adler and Dreikurs, but they do represent a move in contemporary social-psychological theorizing that impinges on issues raised by Adler and Dreikurs. What these contemporary theories do not provide is the reciprocity between individual and group values. Whereas Adler and Dreikurs recognized the crucial interplay between societal and individual values, to a large extent modern psychological theories do not yet recognize the importance of this duality.

Adler early recognized the importance of social life and its role in individual personality development and dynamics. Moreover, he recognized the health-providing necessity of an individual's contribution to the welfare of the community. Dreikurs extended Adler's conceptualization that cooperation requires *social equality*. In a groundbreaking book, Dreikurs (1972/1998) focused on the fact that mental health and positive self-regard rest on a person's belief that he or she is equal to others. For Adler and Dreikurs, human motivation is intricately tied to cognitive representations. Because the personal and the social constructions people build have powerful motivational consequences, social equality is not merely an objective transactional process but, importantly, it also involves a phenomenal representation. A belief in one's value and a belief in people's equality of worth are far-reaching in providing health for the individual as well as for the community. Two key dynamic social-cognitive factors, of valuing oneself and others as equal and of contributing to the community on the basis of respect for self and for others, in their conjunction provide the most enduring processes for well-being.

Adler's emphasis on beliefs, convictions, and goal structure gave a basis for relating his social-psychological perspective to individual and societal dynamics. *Social equality* is the basis for *cooperation*. *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* (social interest or community feeling) is not merely a social belief but has

profound therapeutic value (Alexandra Adler, 1973). It was a major pioneering contribution for Adler to point out that social values and beliefs had important psychodynamic consequences.

Dreikurs extended this approach to individual and group functioning in ways that are still ahead of contemporary approaches. The book, *Social Equality* (Dreikurs, 1972/1998), has been championed by many (e.g., Yotam, 1995) as the crowning achievement of Individual Psychology. It rests upon Adler's pivotal emphasis on *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*. The concept of social equality is fundamental for effective problem solving by the individual as well as by the group, and in his book Dreikurs provided concepts and methods that apply widely to human relations. Whereas many contemporary theorists still argue for bottom-up conceptualizing to account for human thought and actions, by positing that simple specific emotions and biological needs provide the foundation for higher cognitive and moral processes (e.g., Hoffman, 1987, 1990), Adler and Dreikurs stressed the overarching importance of human bonding as a broad social bias already evident in infancy and not reducible to specific emotions or needs (Ferguson, 1996b).

The way Adler and Dreikurs conceptualized the need to belong and contribute as a broad-based social bias is still not readily understood in contemporary psychology. Although others discuss the need to belong (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Myers, 1996, 2001), they do so in terms of specific relationships rather than as the broad-based fundamental human motivation that Adler and Dreikurs conceptualized. The formulation of these two innovators early in the twentieth century provided a unique and integrative approach for the study of values, beliefs, motivation, and emotions.

Although in his theory development Adler initially focused on feelings of inferiority, he wisely understood the distinction between inferiority feeling as a long-term self-esteem variable and as a short-term task-relevant variable (Alfred Adler, 1927/1959, 1929/1969, 1939; Ferguson, 1989, 1999a). The distinction between inferiority feeling as a personal construct tied to an individual's existential and phenomenologically defined self-esteem versus a temporary reaction based on an individual's assessment of task performance in an immediate situation is powerful. Adler recognized in his later writings that inferiority feeling as a self-esteem variable has enormously pathological consequences, and thus he increasingly focused on the rehabilitative necessity of social equality and cooperation between people.

Feelings of inferiority that concern personal status are exaggerated when a person has lowered social interest, and personal inferiority feelings in turn sabotage the individual's commitment to contribute to the welfare of the community. Over the past decades, many professionals trained in Individual Psychology, in implementing the ideas of Adler and Dreikurs, have developed methods to strengthen social interest, and many studies have found

many ways in which social interest benefits both the individual and the community. Decades after their initial formulation, the ideas of Adler and Dreikurs have gained wide empirical support (Kern, Gfroerer, Summers, Curlette, & Matheny, 1996; Kern, Wheeler, & Curlette, 1993; Watkins, 1994; Wheeler, Kern, & Curlette, 1994). Although originating over 60 years ago by means of case studies in clinical work and in educational counseling, these formulations have been supported in recent years in a wide range of nomothetic studies. In spite of increasing evidence demonstrating the potency and health-providing effects from a feeling of belonging that is linked with strivings to contribute to the community on the basis of social equality, this research and these formulations of Adler and Dreikurs are not yet widely known in the mainstream of psychology.

Group Processes and Individual Dynamics. Adler and Dreikurs were pioneers not only in focusing on holism as a psychodynamic principle but also in their social-holistic perspective. Adler is noted for his emphasis on the individual as functioning holistically (Ferguson, 1999a), but he and even more so Dreikurs focused not only on the holism of the individual but also on the holistic nature of group life (Ferguson, 1999b). The dynamics of the group have an influence on human relationships in family life, in the classroom, and in the workplace (Ferguson, 1996a). The individual is part of a social dynamic whole. The personality of a child develops as a function of the dynamics of his or her family, and group life is intricately intertwined with an individual's dynamics throughout his or her lifetime. Although in much of his writing Adler focused on the holism of the individual, he gave prominence to the social context for individual action, thought, and emotion.

In furthering what Adler had begun, Dreikurs gave details in theory and method that provided more clarity to the meaning of social holism. For example, in recommendations for the classroom and teacher leadership actions, Dreikurs (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972/1999; Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1998) recognized the power of the group in shaping individual behavior and emotions, and he recognized equally that each person has a potent influence on the dynamics of the group. In marriage, as well, individual behavior is intricately intertwined with the dynamics of the couple as a social unit (Dreikurs, 1946/1999). Social holism is still little understood in the realm of personality psychology, and Adler and Dreikurs were far ahead of their time.

Adler's formulation regarding birth order often has been misconstrued. For Adler, birth order is not a static determinant of personality; rather, it has effects as part of the dynamics of family constellation. Family constellation is the dynamic context within which birth order derives its meaning and plays a role (Grunwald & McAbee, 1999), and this conceptualization tends to be

poorly understood. Some contemporary writers who advance an evolutionary psychological perspective (e.g., Sulloway, 1999) are moving toward the social dynamic formulation of Adler and Dreikurs by regarding the role of sibling relationships as a dynamic variable rather than merely a static characteristic of birth order, but they fail to take note of the contextual social holism of the total family constellation in shaping the personality development of each child in the family. Evolutionary psychologists emphasize competition for resources, and thus they fail to address the role of family values and family dynamics, choices of cooperation versus competition, and the phenomenological meanings that family members give to family transactions. From the Adlerian perspective, competition between siblings is not a species characteristic, for alliance is also possible. Both are a function of the total family constellation, unique for each family and modifiable according to changes in goals and values.

Functionalism, Adaptation, and Goal-Direction. Adler and Dreikurs were pioneers in identifying goal-direction as the basis of thought, action, and emotion. Other theorists do not deal with the processes and effects of goal-direction in the way conceptualized by Adler and Dreikurs. Some in contemporary psychology are moving toward the idea of purpose in considering the function of action and emotion. This development in contemporary psychology is notable after decades in which the adaptive functional nature of thought, action, and emotion was neglected. The ascendance of evolutionary psychological theorizing (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989; Ekman & Davidson, 1994; Ohman, 1986) has given impetus to considerations of the adaptiveness and function of behavior and thought, and in the study of emotions, a functional perspective is gaining ground (Keltner & Gross, 1999; Keltner & Haidt, 1999). However, Adler's construct of private logic is not acknowledged, and instead of private goals being identified within a social-psychological, dynamic, personality-theoretical framework, the theorizing of the evolutionary psychologists focuses on biological rather than individualized considerations (e.g., Levenson, 1992; Nesse, 1990). An evolutionary perspective does not consider phenomenological, individual dynamics, and it differs markedly from the way goal-direction is conceptualized within Adlerian formulations. For Adler and Dreikurs, goals have social meaning and pertain to an individual's feeling of belonging. They are goals of being rather than of possession (resources).

Contemporary evolutionary psychological theorists converge with the formulations of Adler and Dreikurs in their concern with the adaptation of the total organism. In emphasizing organismic and ecological issues, these contemporary writers have improved upon the mechanistic and intra-individualistic emphases of the past decades. However, in their concern with

species characteristics these contemporary writers ignore individual dynamic processes and thus fail to acknowledge the importance of phenomenological and social-psychological characteristics that are basic in Adlerian thinking. At best the evolutionary psychologists give such Adlerian characteristics secondary importance in comparison to species survival functions.

Because the evolutionary psychologists emphasize resources and the species-survival benefits of specific characteristics, holism and the individualized phenomenological goal-structure of a given person are not considered within their evolutionary concern. Some evolutionary writers take seriously the social nature of human beings, in line with but not crediting the work of Adler and Dreikurs, but these evolutionary writers nevertheless focus on function and adaptiveness in species terms (e.g., Keltner & Potegal, 1997) and not in terms of the individual and group functionalism described by Adler and Dreikurs. The latter focused on the phenomenologically set individual goals of a person, which are developed on the basis of early learning in the family constellation. Thus, the recent strong trend in evolutionary psychology misses the kinds of insights provided by the work of Adler and Dreikurs by not appreciating the way personal goals are shaped and how they influence the course of an individual's experiences throughout a lifetime. Insofar as personality development in contemporary writing is not dynamically portrayed in terms of subjectively formulated goals, whose meanings lie in their social significance, the innovations of Adler and Dreikurs continue to be ahead of their time.

Democratic Human Relationships. In numerous writings, Adler (1932, 1939) and Dreikurs (1969; Dreikurs & Grey, 1992) described what they meant by *democratic human relationships*. They wrote that respect for the individual must be intertwined with respect for the group and community in which the individual's transactions take place. Democratic human relationships allow for mutual respect to be translated into actions that enhance the welfare of individuals as well as the group. Democratic relationships require a commitment for shared responsibility to promote individual and group welfare. Dreikurs and his students have described specific modes of interaction (Dreikurs et al., 1998) that help establish and maintain democratic relationships. These methods benefit all participating members, and some contemporary professionals have advocated similar methods for democratic problem solving (e.g., the approach taken by Stone, Patton, & Heen, 1999).

Whereas a number of professionals have come to understand and accept the basic principles underlying much of the writings of Dreikurs (1946/1999; Dreikurs & Grey, 1992; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964/1999), the larger society has not. There is not yet a widespread realization that freedom with order is the basis of effective human relationships and that freedom without order or order

without freedom impairs individual and societal mental health. As evident in the mass media, professionals who work in fields of education, family life, work organizations, and government policies increasingly advocate perspectives for change that have become more congruent with Adlerian thinking. However, Adlerian ideas are still missing in many facets of life in the larger society.

Many educators still do not understand the dynamics and goals of children's behavior, and many parents still behave in ways that are destructive to family life and to the child's development and welfare. News reports of actions by school personnel and parents illustrate the ineffectiveness of autocratic rule and of laissez-faire disorder. Shared decision making and democratic human relationships are not yet adopted in many work organizations. Individuals in all walks of life still do not ask, "What can I do to improve the welfare of this group?" or "How can I best learn from events, including my own mistakes?" Rather, they seek external factors to blame for deficiencies and disappointments.

Short-Term and Long-Term Goals. Dreikurs's ideas have received assault (Terner & Pew, 1978). Critics have judged his approach as superficial. They argued that he mistakenly focused on short-term goals and on behavior and not primarily or exclusively on long-term goals and on emotions. However, it is a mistake to think that Dreikurs failed to recognize the importance of long-term goals and that he minimized the importance of a client's emotions. In his work with adults, he always worked with long-term goals in psychotherapy, wherein he addressed the question of lifestyle in the earliest sessions. In his therapeutic work the focus was on helping bring changes in the client's lifestyle, and he helped the client to recognize how difficulties in relationships and in symptoms were related to his or her lifestyle. Furthermore, in therapeutic work Dreikurs was clearly attentive to the client's emotions, helping the client to understand the *purpose* of the emotions (Dreikurs, 1967).

Dreikurs considered goals in childhood malleable in terms of the child's immediate situation (Dreikurs et al., 1998). He pointed out that up to the age of about 10 years, the child's goals are oriented toward the significant adults present in the child's immediate life environment (e.g., parents and teachers). When immediate environmental changes occurred, these permitted the child's goals to change. In children up to 10 years of age, fundamental beliefs about life and self could still be changed relatively easily with appropriate interventions by trained adults. In his work with children, Dreikurs (1947) focused on the four mistaken goals (see also Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972/1999; Dreikurs et al., 1998; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964/1999).

The malleability of goals in childhood permits parents, teachers, and counselors to make long-term therapeutic impacts. The variation in short-term goals could be readily seen in children. At home, the child might be in a power contest (with a goal of power) with one parent but with the other

parent the goal could be revenge. With a teacher in school, the child's goal may be power on some occasions but attention at other times. Short-term goals can be changed according to either the rehabilitative or destructive actions of the significant adults. Because rehabilitation is readily possible with children younger than the age of eleven, under some circumstances the beneficial changes can be incorporated into the child's lifestyle and thereby bring alteration in his or her long-term goal. This point is prominent in books written for parents and teachers by Dreikurs and his students (Dreikurs et al., 1998; Grunwald & McAbee, 1999). Although an individual's life-style is developed by the age of four to six (Adler, 1927/1959, 1929/1969), young children can still be given help that has long-term benefits even after the critical early preschool years when the lifestyle is initially developed.

Dreikurs's concern with changes in the clients' goals, in adults as well as children, reflected his conviction that through such changes the client would improve, in symptom removal and in more effective functioning (Dreikurs, 1960). A feeling of strength comes when a person realizes that goals represent choices, and there is a gain in self-confidence when the individual comes to realize that he or she makes choices and sets goals. Some contemporary psychologists, who work within a somewhat different theoretical framework, have shown the powerful ways that goals shape an individual's approach to life problems (Dweck, 1992). Indirectly, research has provided ample support for Dreikurs's conceptualization of the pervasive consequences of an individual's goals. Dreikurs focused on cognitions and goals, short-term as well as long-term, because he recognized their profound effect on the individual's motivation.

A Given Goal Can Lead to a Wide Range of Behaviors. Adler and Dreikurs, in focusing on goals, differed from modern behavior therapists because within any given goal a wide range of behaviors is possible. Although behavior was important for Adler and Dreikurs in understanding private logic and personality dynamics, they emphasized the need to change goals and not merely to change behavior. One can be passive or active within the same goal. One can be charming or irritating and still have the goal of attention (Dreikurs et al., 1998). If one wants to help the client move toward prosocial actions, prosocial goals based on *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* are the basis for change. Dreikurs emphasized *goal modification* as distinct from the behavior therapist's *behavior modification* (Barlow, 1993).

Just as short-term goals differ from long-term ones, so changing goals differs from changing behavior. Dreikurs's emphasis on the importance of goals and not only of behavior is evident in the way he (Dreikurs, 1947; Dreikurs et al., 1998) discussed the mistaken goals of the child. They are described as *mistaken* because the child seeks a place of being special rather than of belonging and contributing as an equal member of the group. Thus,

although the goal of attention getting is less disturbing if the child uses useful rather than useless or irritating behavior, from the perspective of the child's mental health, striving to be special is not a goal the adult should foster. Socially useful behavior that derives from a goal of contribution has not only more positive behavioral qualities, but the child is not as vulnerable to discouragement when the positive behaviors occur for contribution rather than for attention getting. The overt behavioral difference may be subtle, but the underlying motivational dynamics are neither subtle nor trivial.

Dreikurs as Teacher

Just as psychoanalytically-oriented professionals considered Adler's work too superficial and simplified (Watson, 1963, p. 457), so was Dreikurs criticized, even by some Adlerian professionals who considered his methodological and conceptual innovations to be a move toward superficiality and away from depth. He developed didactic approaches with clients and with students because he believed these to be important for learning. He sought to make Individual Psychology understandable and to provide methods that can be readily applied (Terner & Pew, 1978). Simplification for him became understandability but not a lack of profound meaning.

Dreikurs's work needs to be understood in terms of the circumstance in which he functioned. In his role as teacher, he was focusing on helping counselors and teachers to be effective professionals, and when he was teaching his style was clearly different than when he was providing therapy in a one-to-one relationship. Whoever saw him as a teacher knows that Dreikurs strove for clarity in his communications. He sought to understand the private logic of clients that he counseled before a professional audience, and at the same time he also sought to show that good counseling skills are learnable. He could be forceful, but he could also be very kind and sensitive. To reach a client one needed to find many ways of communicating, and he could be charming as well as direct.

When he taught, Dreikurs was always concerned that his message would be clearly understood, and he was a superb teacher (Bitter, 1997). While he was alive, his and Adler's ideas seemed novel at best, and to many audiences the ideas seemed even bizarre. During his lifetime, Freudian thinking was dominant among professionals, and folk-culture beliefs were dominant among lay people (because at that time there was still relatively little psychological knowledge in the general population). Thus, Dreikurs had enormous opposition to his ideas when he gave lectures and demonstrations. In his belief that Individual Psychology was essential for the lives of people, for the individual as well as for society, he considered it crucial that his audience clearly understood his concepts and methods.

When training professionals, he considered that the persons he taught had a responsibility to help their clients, and for this reason he could be a tough taskmaster in his teaching. However, his goal was always clear: To help people. *In his role as a teacher he worked very hard to communicate the content of his ideas, but likewise, when he was a therapist working with a deeply discouraged client, he was very supportive and encouraging.* Both he and Adler considered therapy an educational process. However, Dreikurs's style within the therapeutic relationship differed greatly from his style when he gave a formal lecture or demonstration.

The distinction between situations is very important in considering Dreikurs's style of communication. He considered cognitions and goals to be central in bringing insight to the client, but he knew that for the client to make changes far more was required. He gave encouragement and emotional support and built trust with his clients, who often came from far away on the basis of his reputation as an *outstanding therapist*. Dreikurs related to the client according to the needs of the situation. When encouragement, support, and sensitive listening were needed, he was a very sensitive and supportive therapist.

Encouragement, Discouragement, and Prevention of Pathology

Those who considered Dreikurs's style as excessively cognitive and as not attending enough to the client's emotions failed to appreciate his educational perspective. He dealt with the client's beliefs because he understood that mistaken beliefs can prevent prosocial functioning, but doing so did not mean he failed to give emotional support and empathy to the client. *In his practice he was a warmly empathic therapist.*

For Dreikurs as for Adler, psychopathology represented discouragement, and he was always concerned with the extent to which the person was discouraged or encouraged. Discouragement could arise from disturbed cognitions, and in the era of Freudian emphasis on libidinal urges, he was a courageous pioneer in the practice, development, and teaching of what might be called cognitive psychotherapy. Moreover, he recognized that discouragement can arise from pathological life circumstances. With a social-service orientation he gave, often unstintingly, whatever help he could to clients who needed to make changes in debilitating circumstances.

Dreikurs and his students wrote with great insight on the topic of *encouragement* (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963/2000) and because of his influence, many others have followed his ideas and some have written widely on that topic (e.g., Evans, 1989, 1996). Dreikurs practiced encouragement extensively in his counseling and therapy with clients and in his consulting with families and educators.

Although Dreikurs was a pioneer in cognitive psychotherapy, his work differed in many important ways from those generally identified as cognitive

psychotherapists (e.g., Beck & Greenberg, 1996). He was concerned with social interest and goals, which are not part of present-day cognitive therapeutic procedures. Moreover, unlike modern behavioral therapists or modern cognitive-behavioral therapists, Dreikurs focused on *both* the immediate life situation of the client and on the life-pattern of the personality.

In line with behavioral therapists, Dreikurs recognized that immediate life circumstances were crucial for a client, but he always related immediate circumstances to basic life patterns, as did Adler. Insights about lifestyle gave meaning to understanding private logic, emotions, and goals in the immediate circumstances. Even though immediate goals were always congruent with the individual's lifestyle, Dreikurs advocated that many other personal, social, and cultural variables need to be considered. Dreikurs and Adler both recognized, long before their time, that an individual's functioning is always a joint product of immediate circumstances and lifestyle, and that private logic, as part of a person's subjective apperceptions and attributions, plays a major dynamic role in the person's actions, thoughts, and emotions. Adler and Dreikurs focused on dynamic life-patterns existing since early childhood, and they did so within the context of here-and-now problems and their solutions.

Adler and Dreikurs were change-agents in that they sought to improve the quality of life for as many people as possible. They devoted much of their energies to *prevention*. Parent education became a major thrust in their work, because if people around the world knew how to encourage rather than discourage children, learned how to help children feel belonging, and trained children to contribute to the welfare of the community, healthy children would be the consequence and, in turn, a healthy society would emerge. Adler and Dreikurs advocated that teaching the public how to prevent mistaken approaches to life would dramatically reduce the need for "cure." Sound practices of prevention help to preclude the necessity for therapeutic interventions.

Although in part the educational and preventive model of Adler and Dreikurs opened them up to mistaken attacks of superficiality, other factors undoubtedly also contributed to that attack. Whether one considers the work of Adler and Dreikurs as superficial, however, concerns an important question of what is meant by "depth."

What Is Meant by Depth?

From a psychoanalytic perspective, *awareness* and the processes of conscious thoughts, goals, or emotions, represent superficial dynamics, in contrast to unconscious processes that deal with depth. Freud's formulations (Freud, 1901/1960, 1920/1975) provided the basis for this categorization. However, all that is known today belies this type of dichotomy. Contemporary research (Marcel & Bisiach, 1993) increasingly supports Adler's conceptualization,

with an emphasis on terms like “unaware” or “nonconscious” rather than “unconscious.” Adler pointed out that much of human knowledge, beliefs, thoughts, goals, emotions and even actions are out of awareness, but just because they are not in awareness at a given moment does not mean they might not be in awareness at other moments.

Awareness also is influenced by physiological constraints. Many psychological processes are unavailable for being in awareness. Lack of neurological feedback loops or other nervous-system limitations can make certain psychological processes inaccessible to conscious awareness (such as occurs in certain types of interoceptive conditioning done in Pavlovian laboratories), and many kinds of brain functions can be phenomenally experienced only by indirect means.

Much of human long-term memory is not dynamically charged in that it has little relationship to emotional or motivational characteristics. Many of the phenomena studied by cognitive psychologists deal with learning strategies and processes of which the individual is unaware. These are normative in that *individual differences play at best a minor role. Extremely rapid* (5 or 10 msec) but repeated presentation of words in a word recognition experiment, for example, can bring about correct word naming after many repetitions even though the stimulus duration is far too fast for correct naming on the initial presentation and the person cannot explain at all why suddenly the word is clearly recognizable (Ferguson, 1992, 1993). Words that are perceptually masked or degraded and not consciously identified can have subsequent effects on performance, words and pictures can have priming effects (faster latency for recognition or for lexical decisions) on later presented words or pictures, and many kinds of memory retrievals occur without any explicit awareness or access to awareness (see reviews in Marcel & Bisiach, 1993; Revonsuo & Kamppinen, 1994; Schacter, 1987).

Thus, the myriad of mental phenomena that occur outside of awareness could be designated as “deep” but, typically, that is not what is meant by depth. In the psychodynamic realm, the designation of depth tends to be reserved for individualized unaware experiences that have high personal meaning for a given person. Accessibility for these experiences is usually low. By that definition, revelation of a person’s lifestyle is very deep. It is highly individualized, and the person is not aware of his or her basic assumptions about self and life, is not aware of his or her life goal, and has no awareness of how the lifestyle developed in the early childhood years in his or her family constellation. Yet lifestyle disclosure can occur in less than 3 hours of diagnostic interviewing, as done by Dreikurs and the persons he trained, and the impact of the resultant insight can be far-reaching. The understanding from such disclosure can make many memories accessible and can give meaning within a very short time to a wide range of thoughts,

actions, and emotions. Thus, accessibility and speed of understanding or insight need not be criteria for depth or superficiality. Other criteria are clearly important.

Dreikurs and Adler pointed out that major changes in how a person functions can occur when core beliefs are identified, in that they organize many other beliefs. When a person understands lifestyle and its relationship to immediate goals and the person examines these in relationship to *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, such understanding has a long-term and broad impact. When a person learns how he or she seeks to find his or her place in life, and how this process relates to current concerns and functioning, that knowledge provides *deep* understanding and enables the person to make far-reaching changes. Merely delving into out-of-awareness (“unconscious”) processes is not likely to bring such far-reaching changes. A definition of depth based on this criterion is likely to bring little relief to a suffering client or to bring healthful life changes for a person whose relationships are destructive.

If nonconscious fantasies, thoughts, or emotions are not tied to goals and to social interest and finding one’s place, the individual is not likely to benefit in sought-for ways. It is not uncommon for persons who have dealt extensively with a large amount of material that is identified by psychoanalytically oriented therapists as “unconscious” to continue to pursue thoughts, emotions, and actions that are pathological and destructive because the persons have not recognized the purpose for these patterns nor have they been induced to increase their social interest. The cognitive-social personality theory and methods of Adler and Dreikurs are very different from behavioristic approaches and, by criteria of broad and long-term health-providing effects, the theory and methods are indeed deep.

Note

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