

**From: Ansbacher, Heinz (1965): The Structure of Individual Psychology. In: Wolman (Hg.): Scientific Psychology. New York/London (Basic Books) (2nd Edition), pp 340 ff.**

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# 18 HEINZ L. ANSBACHER

## THE STRUCTURE OF INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY

ADLER'S THEORIES of personality, mental disorder, and psychotherapy, which he termed "individual psychology," are relatively simple, direct conceptualizations which may be summarized in the following series of axioms and postulates.

- (1) Life in all its forms is characterized by movement.
- (2) This movement has a direction which is toward overcoming difficulties, toward growth, expansion.
- (3) In man, who is capable of taking an attitude toward himself, the general biological movement is extended into a striving which may be described as a striving from a felt minus situation to a plus situation, from a feeling of inferiority to superiority; a striving for perfection or totality, for success.
- (4) This striving receives its specific form and direction from the individual's unique, subjectively conceived goal of success, or self ideal.
- (5) The goal of success is influenced by objective biological and social factors, but is ultimately the subjective creation of the individual. Because it is an ideal, it is a fiction.
- (6) The goal is only partly in the individual's awareness. To the extent that it is not, it is the psychologist's hypothetical construct. The content of the unconscious is a construction of the psychologist.
- (7) The human individual is a self-consistent organization, like all organisms, and it is unique.

(8) The self-consistency is reflected in the individual's style of life, formed in accordance with his self ideal.

(9) All part-functions are subordinated to the life style. This includes biological as well as psychological functions.

(10) The life style, or personality structure including the goal, may be inferred inductively by viewing the individual's past and present situations and all his expressions and actions in their coherence.

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(11) The individual is endowed with creative power.

(12) The individual's uniqueness ultimately rests in this creative power.

(13) Objective biological and social conditions, past and present, provide probabilities, opportunities, and limitations. They are not directly causal factors in the individual.

(14) Individual causality is derived from the individual's goal-directed life style, which uses the objective conditions provided by heredity and environment, but was originally and ultimately the individual's creation. Thus the individual is in the last analysis self-determined.

(15) The goal-directed life style influences particularly the individual's perceptions, providing him with an apperceptive schema.

(16) As an aspect of the life style including his apperceptive schema, the individual forms an opinion of himself and the world.

(17) Actions are determined by the opinion of oneself and the world as well as by the goal.

(18) The goal becomes the final cause, the ultimate independent variable. To the extent that it provides the key for understanding the individual, it is a working hypothesis of the psychologist.

(19) The individual cannot be considered apart from society. He is inextricably embedded in it. His very thinking, using language as a main tool, is socially determined, since language is a social product and is socially acquired.

(20) All important life problems of the individual, including certain "drive" satisfactions, are social problems, namely, problems of general human relations, occupation, and love.

(21) The logic which follows from human interrelatedness is the closest approximation to an "absolute truth."

(22) Man has an innate capacity for understanding his social embeddedness, a social feeling. When this capacity has been developed into social skills of cooperation and fellowship, it acquires secondary dynamic attributes in the form of social interest. Thus socialization is a matter of development, not of repression.

(23) Because the main problems which man faces in life are of a social nature, he cannot solve them successfully without a sufficiently developed social interest.

(24) Mental health is characterized by a goal of success which is formed under the influence of social interest, is self-transcending, and is on the socially useful side. Social interest is the criterion of mental health.

(25) Mental disorder is characterized by underdeveloped social interest, increased inferiority feelings, and an exaggerated compensatory goal of personal superiority over others. It means actual failure in life when the individual becomes confronted with the problems of life.

(26) Psychotherapy is based on providing encouragement through a

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good human relationship. Thereby the patient's social interest is strengthened. Beyond this, the patient is given an understanding of his erroneous life style so that he may adopt a better method of living.

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