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Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology

Around the middle of the 19th century, the capital and residence city of Vienna experienced a remarkable economic boom, and people from all parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire flocked to the city wanting to have a part in it. One of them was Leopold Adler (1835-1922), the father of Alfred Adler, who came from Kittsee in Burgenland, which at that time was in the Hungarian part of the monarchy and also one of the seven Jewish communities in Burgenland. Through close contacts with the Jewish communities in Vienna, Leopold Adler met Pauline Berry (1845-1906), the daughter of a successful businessman, and married her. The marriage produced six children. Alfred Adler was the secondborn (born 07-02-1870) after his brother Sigmund (b. 1868). Another child, Rudolf, died in 1876 immediately after birth (biography lit.: Albrecht 2011; Bruder-Bezzel 1999; Datler 2005; Ellenberger 1970, pp. 571–599; Grey 1998; Hoffman 1994; Rattner 1983; Rattner 1997a; Rattner 1997b; Schiferer 1995; Stepansky 1983).

Like his father-in-law, Leopold Adler worked as a merchant, trading in fruits and grain, though he did not settle down in Penzing but in Rudolfsheim, which today is part of the 15th district of Vienna and named after Crown Prince Rudolf. Due to the stock market crash of 1873, the family had to move from "a rather middle-class district [...] into the narrow and crowded confines of Leopoldstadt, the 2nd Viennese district" (Schiferer 1995, p. 18), where Alfred was initially taught by a private tutor to then enroll at the Leopoldstädter Realgymnasium (secondary school) at the age of nine. In the early 1880s, his maternal grandparents died and the family inherited a lot of money. They "drew a line under the daily struggle for survival and sought a fresh start. The choice fell on Hernals, an up-and-coming district" (Schiferer 1995, p. 19), where the father's business flourished initially until he again fell into financial difficulties in the 1890s. Only the financial skills of Alfred's older brother Sigmund allowed the family to pull through. After the move, Alfred Adler transferred to the Hernalser Gymnasium (high school) and remained there until graduation, because as the son of Hungarian Jews in the anti-Semitic climate of Vienna, he appreciated the liberal environment at this school.

In his childhood, Adler comes close to death on several occasions (Adler 1913d, p 182). At the age of four or five years, he is hit by a car twice even though at that time there were only a few cars in the suburbs and they drove slowly (Adler 1947/2005). Above all, Adler a sickly child and suffers heavily from rickets as well as laryngospasm, "a state of breathlessness and loss of voice [that] interrupts the crying" (Adler 1913d, p 183). "So, early organic inferiority that I struggled hard to overcome, and an early connection with events beyond the family circle, definitely laid the foundations of my psychic structure and my attitude toward life" (Adler 1947/2005), he will write later in his Study of Organ Inferiority and Its Psychical Compensation ("Studie über Minderwertigkeit von Organen") (Adler 1907a). This is the context of one of his first childhood memories, which is that "of sitting on a bench, bandaged because of rickets, with my healthy elder brother sitting opposite me. He could run, jump, and move quite effortlessly, while for me movement of any sort was a strain and an effort. Everyone went to great pains to help me, and my mother and father did all that was in their power to do. At the time of this recollection I must have been about two years old" (Adler 1947/2005). However, his illness is also an advantage, because "I was reared and watched with the greatest solicitude because of my sickness" (Adler 1947/2005). However, he states that he "must have been forced to put up with a great deal less attention when my younger brother was born" (Adler 1947/2005).

A formative element in Adler's childhood and adolescence is also the association with his peers in the suburbs of Vienna. "Running around with the boys and girls of the neighborhood, self-assertion in the milieu of peers, appeared to him to be a first-rate educational moment. On the 'street' you don't get far with pampering and indulgences" (Rattner 1997a, p. 12), which should be regarded as a compensatory element with regard to his childhood illnesses and the mother who favored him because of them. He gives account of similar patterns from his schooldays. After being judged "untalented" by his mathematics teacher, he succeeds in "solving an exceptionally difficult task, after which he became the best math student in the class" (Rattner, 1997a, p. 14). This incident caused him to doubt the concept of talent.

The aforementioned near-death experiences and the early demise of his brother Rudolf are probably reasons for wanting to enroll at the Medical University of Vienna. But from his point of view, the main reason was that at the age of five he fell ill with pneumonia and that the doctor who was summoned thought the illness was so severe he gave up on Adler. "A second doctor suggested treatment after all, and within a few days I recovered [...]. I remember that since then, I always imagined my future as a doctor [...]. It is clear that I expected more from this career choice than it could deliver [...]. And so I was forced, in the changing form of guiding fiction, in my consciousness to modify my goal until it seemed to be close enough to reality" (Adler 1913d, pp. 183–184; cf. Adler 1947/2005).

In summary, at the end of his short article "How I Chose My Career", which is the source of several of the quotes used in this text, Adler declares the following: "It is these psychological tendencies which even in my childhood had formed my style of life, to which I am also indebted for my insight into psychic manifestations" (Adler 1947/2005). And it is a fact that this and the second autobiographical account, the source of the rest of the citations (Adler 1913d, pp. 181-186), mention problems and concepts that are essential in the field of individual psychology (see below), such as organ inferiority, feelings of inferiority, compensation theory, the striving for power and significance, sibling order, pampering, fiction, social equality and, in connection with this, a socialist, but not dogmatic belief and a feasibility philosophy inspired by the Enlightenment that remains skeptical about the "determinism of genes", but at the same time acknowledges the potential for conflict that stems from childhood wounds.

But before I go into detail about the theory, let me outline the further course of the biography. Immediately after graduating from high school in 1888, Adler begins to study medicine at the University of Vienna. He graduates with a doctorate on 11/22/1895, interrupted only by military service as a one-year volunteer – "a privilege for wealthy and intellectual elites, with the advantage of reduced and segmented military service" (Schiferer 1995, p. 41). During his time at the university he joins, as almost all students, a fraternity, the Austrian Student Union, which is positioned at the political left and serves as a gathering point for Jews and all those who are neither German Nationalist nor Christian-oriented. The leadership circle of the student association under the later writer Franz Blei (1871-1942), which includes Alfred Adler, makes contact with the head of the labor movement and meets, among others, Victor Adler (1852-1918), the founder of the Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei (Social Democratic Workers' Party). "As initially small as it was, this band of 'doers' led by Franz Blei, the branching relationships it was going to develop in all areas of Viennese life, help to better explain some developments in Alfred Adler's life" (Schiferer 1995, p. 38; cf. Stepansky 1983, pp. 8–31).

In line with his political views, Adler meets Russian feminist Raissa Timofevna Epstein (1873-1962) during his studies and marries her in 1897. They have four children, including individual psychologists Alexandra Adler (1901-2001), Kurt Adler (1905-1997), and Valentine Adler (1898-1942). The latter emigrates from Germany to the Soviet Union in 1933 and likely fell victim to the Stalinist purges (cf. Kenner 2002). Raissa Epstein comes from a wealthy Jewish family in Smolensk, is engaged in the women's movement, close to Marxism, and in close contact with Leo Trotzki, who visits the Adlers' often. Adler thus "married a very confident, combative woman who had lived 'free' and now did not intend to give up her 'freedoms'" (Schiferer 1995, p. 49).

In the early years of his career, Adler remains closely connected to the theory and practice of socialist ideology. In 1898, his Health Manual for the Tailoring Trade (Adler 1898) is published – one of the first contributions to social medicine at all – in which he deals with the effects of

the work environment on the health of individuals and the related responsibility of the physician. In the same year, he opens a medical practice in the second district. "His willingness to treat underprivileged people without charging a fee under some circumstances, without loudly proclaiming this as charity, made the young doctor sought-after and popular. Political commitment and contact with former classmates secured him influence in surprisingly many areas" (Schiferer 1995, p. 53).

Although the social aspect remains important for Adler, his main interest changes when Sigmund Freud invites him to establish a discussion group about psychoanalysis with three other colleagues in 1902. Founding members alongside Freud and Adler are Max Kahane, Rudolf Reitler, and Wilhelm Stekel, all of them respected Jewish doctors and – with the exception of socialist Adler – politically rather liberal. At first everything is going harmoniously by Stekel's account (cf. Stekel 1950, p. 116), but, as documented by the Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society (Nunberg & Federn, 4 vol. 1962–1975), the further development of the "Wednesday Society" shows that from 1907 at the latest an increasing disagreement emerged between Freud and Adler (cf. i.e. Nunberg & Feather 1962, vol. 1, presentation and discussion of 06/03/1907) who from the outset was an eager and eloquent debater. This can be gathered from reading the Minutes register, because there, Adler takes the most space after Freud, namely a whole five pages including cross-references.

From 1911 on, Freud and Adler go their separate ways (Bruder-Bezzel 1999, pp. 32–36; Handlbauer 1998; Schiferer 1995, pp. 56–65; Stepansky 1983, pp. 81–205). Adler establishes the "Society for Free Psychoanalytic Research", which is renamed "Society for Individual Psychology" in 1913. To substantiate his teachings both in theory and philosophy, he publishes his magnum opus *The Neurotic Character* ("Über den nervösen Charakter") (Adler 1912a) in 1912, which he submits as a postdoctoral thesis (Habilitationsschrift) at the University of Vienna, but which is rejected at the instigation of psychiatrist Julius Wagner-Jauregg. The reasoning is revealing, because the postdoctoral thesis expertise states that Adler might not have stayed true to the "tenets" of psychoanalysis but to its "method" (Beckham-Widmanstetter 1965, p. 183). "It is for the first time that a disciple of this school is applying for a teaching position; and it will therefore be necessary that the professors collegium debate this issue in some more detail, whether it is desirable that what this representative of this school has to teach should be taught at the medical faculty in Vienna" (Beckham-Widmanstetter 1965, p. 183). This is a clear mainstream medicine rejection of depth psychology and a typical "reasoning" pattern of established mainstream science against unpopular trends. It is reasonably certain that not only anti-socialist, but also anti-Semitic reservations played a role in this when one considers Wagner-Jauregg's quite benevolent attitude toward the Nazi racial ideology (Neugebauer 2005) – incidentally, the Upper Austrian "State Psychiatric Clinic" in Linz is named after that same Wagner-Jauregg.

The prevention of a university career in Austria is very painful for Adler; a consolation, however, is that after World War I, individual psychology takes off in a big way. The *Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie* (International Journal of Individual Psychology) is founded as early as 1914. Today it is called *Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie* (Journal of Individual Psychology) and published by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in Göttingen. Important manuals are published, in particular *Heilen und Bilden* (Healing and Education) (Adler & Furtmüller 1914a), as well as the *Handbuch der Individualpsychologie* (Manual of Individual Psychology) (Wexberg 1926), and in addition important monographs, above all Wexberg's both descriptive and profound book *Individualpsychologie. Eine systematische Darstellung* (Individual Psychology: A Systematic Representation), which takes a mediating position between individual psychology and psychoanalysis and is still worth reading (Wexberg 1928/1987; about Wexberg: Kümmel 2010), and also Dreikurs' *Grundbegriffe der Individualpsychologie* (Principles of Individual Psychology) (Dreikurs 1933/2009). Adler himself writes the books *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology* ("Praxis und Theorie der Individualpsychologie") (Adler 1920a) and *Understanding Human Nature* ("Menschenkenntnis") (Adler 1927a), a systematic description of his theory in comprehensible form and with programmatic claim, namely to spread his doctrine, which is why the titles chosen for both the German and the English edition were designed to appeal to as many people as possible.

Not only the theory is improved in the interwar period, but also and especially the practical implementation. Individual-psychological counseling units are institutionalized in "red Vienna" (Gstach 2003), which exist even today as "Child-Guidance Clinics", and reforms are realized in the education sector that are mainly associated with the names Oskar Spiel and Ferdinand Birnbaum. "They practiced an individual-psychological style of teaching" that aimed to improve "the development and performance of their students through community-based education without pressure" (Schiferer 1995, p. 170). These experiments in education are scientifically monitored and documented, Vienna becomes "an educational Mecca for domestic and foreign visitors" (Schiferer 1995, p. 170).

Adler himself also contributes to the popularization of his teachings. He lectures at community colleges, becomes a professor at the Pedagogical Institute of the City of Vienna in 1924, and medical director of the Mariahilfer outpatient clinic in 1929, an institution for the treatment of mental disorders. From 1926 on, he lectures in the US, and in 1932 he receives what he was not granted in Vienna: a professorship for clinical psychology at the Long Island Medical College. In 1934, he moves his place of residence to New York permanently. He dies on May 28, 1937, in Aberdeen (Scotland) shortly before the start of a three-week lecture series at the local university. The cremated coffin remains in the chapel of Aberdeen College for decades (cf. Rosche & Zumer, 2009), until 2011, just in time for the 100th anniversary of the establishment of individual psychology, when it is transferred to Vienna, where Adler is buried in a grave

of honor at the Central Cemetery.

Although Adler is well known in the United States in the 1930s – Germany as the then largest book market has banned his writings by then – he remains less successful in professional circles than Freud. Psychoanalysis has been received increasingly in the USA in the 1920s and it provides a more structured theoretical framework than individual psychology. In addition, Adler is considered a dissenter among the established analysts, who is to be approached with skepticism. In a popular context, though, he has a broad impact, because he simplifies his teachings for the American market which is heavily influenced by an optimistic feasibility ideology. The tragic and skeptical aspects of his theory, such as the aggression drive or inferiority complex, are pushed to the side and give way to the "pursuit of perfection" and an exaggerated emphasis on the "social interest". "Adler allowed a superficial pragmatism at the expense of a thorough analytical-therapeutic approach" (Kenner 2007, p. 52). The contrasts between North American and German individual psychology are still obvious today, made visible for example in a special issue of the *Journal of Individual Psychology*, where an article by the American authors Henry F. Stein and Martha E. Edwards is criticized by German-speaking authors (Lehmkuhl 2000).

The different perceptions of Adler thus resonate to the present: individual psychology in North America focuses more on the cognitive elements in Adler's teachings, on training manuals or on a structured approach to therapy, and shows less interest in the psychodynamic content with its conflicts and its quite tragic potential (i.e., Dreikurs, 1992; Grigorescu, 2011; Johansen, 2010; McKay & Dinkmeyer, 2003; Powers & Griffith, 1987; Savage, Nicholl & Mansager, 2003; Shulman & Mosak, 1988; Sweeney, 2009). So it says in the book *Alfred Adler. The Forgotten Prophet*: "It should also help us to understand more clearly the relationship between the so-called unconscious and conscious minds, which Adler saw as levels of awareness rather than disparate entities as proposed by Freud" (Grey 1998, p. IX). In the following paragraph, the author immediately talks about the "cosmic finality" and speculates about the nature of God (Grey 1998, p. IX). Similarly, it says on the official website of the "North American Society of Adlerian Psychology": "Adler's theory is a holistic psychology that focuses on the goals and purposes of human behavior" (NASAP) (NASAP 2013). In this context, it is probably no coincidence that the NASAP's *Journal of Individual Psychology* devoted two special issues to the international prevalence of individual psychology (Carlson 2012; Sperry & Carlson 2012), but ignored the German-speaking countries completely: countries such as Taiwan, Malta, and Slovakia are discussed in detail, the country of origin of individual psychology, however, is not.

In contrast, individual psychology in the German-speaking countries – with the exception of Switzerland (SGIPA 2012) and the Rattner School in Berlin (Kaminski & Mackenthun 1997) – has focused increasingly on the psychodynamic-psychoanalytic content of individual psychology since the 1970s (Ringel 1973, Schmidt 1982). This development and rapprochement

with psychoanalysis is documented especially in the *Journal of Individual Psychology* (*Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie*) which is published four times a year and in the *Contributions to Individual Psychology* (*Beiträgen zur Individualpsychologie*), which are a result of the annual meetings of the "German Society for Individual Psychology" (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Individualpsychologie*) and dedicated to a specific topic each, such as "evil magic" (Wahl & Lehmkuhl 2012) or "life tasks and life fissure[s]" (Wahl & Lehmkuhl 2013), to mention only the two most recent volumes. In contrast to psychoanalysis, however, comprehensive, systematic descriptions of the current individual psychology that identifies as psychodynamic – be it in the form of a monograph or an anthology – are rare. Thus, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of individual psychology in 2011, only two books have been published (Rieken 2011; Rieken, Sindelar & Stephenson 2011) that document the current status. However, to my knowledge, little has been published in an international context as well, namely a single anthology, and that belatedly in 2012 (Maniacci & Carlson 2012).

Like Freud, Adler is a physician, and like Freud, his thinking is heavily influenced by physiology. At the beginning stands the teaching of organ inferiority (Adler 1907a), which means malformations or functional defects of the organism. They are perceived as a disadvantage, something one is more or less aware of, and provoke emotional reactions, especially the desire for compensation. Known examples of compensation for physical handicaps are, for example, Beethoven's hearing impairment or the stigmatization of Anton Bruckner's ear by a *nevus flammeus*, a portwine stain. Speech errors can also lead to compensatory achievements. Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Marilyn Monroe, Bruce Willis, and Rowan Atkinson, for example, all were and/or are known stutterers.

The theory of organ inferiority is in a sense the dregs of individual psychology and an early scientific thematization of the relationship between body, mind, and spirit. It is still committed to a large extent to biologicistic thinking, because mental problems arise from a physical infirmity and not from conflicts or defects and their corresponding emotions and affects. What it has in common with the development and personality theory Adler defined later, however, is that emotional distress and/or feelings of inferiority demand compensation through a striving for significance.

Feelings of inferiority and compensation thereof through striving for significance and power and/or the pursuit of social equality are the central theoretical elements that have become known not only in professional circles, but also the general public, for example when someone "must be compensating for something" or is suffering from an "inferiority complex". It is primarily a theory of selfregulation, which is mainly important in the context of the individualistic societies of the Western modern age because they put higher demands on the individual than traditionalist societies where many decisions are taken out of the individual's hands and certain

conflicts rooted in the individualization of life processes arise only to a lesser extent – from practical issues such as career choice or choice of partner to fundamental questions such as how to realize oneself or what is the personal meaning of one's own life. Adler described compensation theory as follows (subsequent quotations are cited from the German Adler study edition in English translation):

"Considering the fact that every child is inferior in life and without a considerable degree of social interest of the people close to him could not exist, if one looks at the smallness and clumsiness of the child, which is long lasting and leaves him with the impression that it is difficult to cope with life, then it must be assumed that every spiritual life begins with a more or less deep sense of inferiority. This is the force that drives and develops all the child's efforts, that requires a goal from which the child expects all the reassurance and safekeeping of their life for the future and which forces the child to follow a path that seems appropriate to achieve this goal." (Adler, 1927a, p. 72).

Similar to the philosophical anthropology of the 20th century, man is "mainly determined by defects [...], thus fundamentally negative" (Gehlen, 1997, p. 33; the following according to Rieken, Sindelar & Stephenson 2011, pp. 57-64). Because the child is initially helpless, small, and dependent on others, "every spiritual life begins with a more or less deep sense of inferiority". At the same time, though, this triggers compensation by being the "driving force" for achieving a goal that promises security, recognition, or power, and ideally leads to "social equality". In cases where the development goes unfavorably, because the feeling of inferiority is perceived as "particularly oppressive", the result is an "over-compensation" in the course of which "the striving for power and superiority [is overemphasized] and escalated into the pathological" (Adler 1927a, p. 76).

Phenomena that oppose the striving for significance are the "need for affection", which is understood as the satisfaction of the "impulses grappling for an object" (Adler 1908d, p. 79), and the "social interest". The latter is in fact a corrective to the aggression drive, which is the "driving force" behind the compensation. Adler introduced this drive as an addition to the libido theory when he was still a member of the Wednesday Society, creating a deep rift between him and Freud. The aggression drive serves the "struggle for satisfaction" (Adler 1908b, p. 72) or the "derivation of pleasure" (Adler 1908b, p. 71). – The main starting point according to Adler is therefore a negative position, a deficit, "individual psychology [...] begins and ends with the problem of inferiority" (Adler 1929d, p. 147). This is similar to the Freudian psychoanalysis of the libido. Both authors use as the starting point of their theory a fundamental urge that results in a sense of dissatisfaction. And both pursue a similar goal as the drive seeks satisfaction: either diverting of the libido with the aid of appropriate objects or compensation of the inferiority complex via the aggression drive or the striving for significance. In both cases, there are also inhibitory instances that stand in the way of comprehensive satisfaction, namely society and culture.

These are fundamental similarities that are often overlooked, and even Freud has to admit in his critical discussion of Adler in his text *The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement* that Adler's theory "is still built on a drive theory" (Freud 1914d, p. 60). However, Adler has a different conception of the ego than Freud. For Freud, it takes the role of mediator between the id and the superego and is mainly characterized by weakness (Freud 1914d, p. 53). For Adler, on the other hand, the ego is not a – usually quite weak – instance among several, as he defines it differently in that it does not have to be stronger a priori, but it does take a more central role because it is synonymous with the person he considers a whole or unity. This is *nota bene* where the name Individual Psychology derives from, because "individual" in Latin means the "indivisible".

In this regard, Adler is part of a scientific tradition that is now rather marginalized, namely the holistic thinking, which has its origins in antiquity and is emphasized by the North American branch of individual psychology. The term "whole" or "holon" is connected to Plato first of all: in the *Timaeus* it is the Creator God who wants to create a creature as perfect as possible, that lacks nothing and insofar is referred to as "whole", as "holon" (Plato 1929, 32 d). Equally prominent is a notion traced back to Aristotle that there are things "which have a plurality of parts, and which are not a total aggregate but a whole of some sort distinct from the parts" (Aristotle 1933, book 8.6, 1045a) – a concept that prompted later generations to formulate the saying: "The whole is more than the sum of its parts".

An example: Adler writes in reference to a teacher trained in individual psychology that when dealing with a student with behavioral problems the teacher knew he "could begin at any arbitrary point, because every symptom is always a part of the great melody of the individual" (Adler, 1931m, p. 476; cf. Eife, 2011, p. 65). This is a striking image that can also be found in literature. Joseph von Eichendorff, for example, writes in his novel *Ahnung und Gegenwart* (*Foreboding and Presence*) about the "peculiar core melody which is given to everybody deep in their soul" (Eichendorff 1965, p. 59). Adler calls this peculiar "melody of the individual" the lifestyle, and it forms "a *unity*, because it has developed out of the difficulties of early life and the pursuit of a goal" (1929d, p. 53; emphasis added, B.R.).

The phrasing is interesting, because the causal analytical view, namely the centering on the origin in childhood, is combined with looking ahead. This has consequences for the view of the unconscious, because it will not be considered only causally as a source of actions, but also as a means to an end. This shows a significant difference between individual psychology and psychoanalysis, perhaps not primarily in the subject matter, but in terms of intention and of the focus of both authors. In other words, one can always ask where a behavior or an attitude comes from and where it leads or what one wants to achieve with it. Both options are established by both Freud and Adler: the libido is a base drive, but by its desire for satisfaction also has a goal, namely *Triebabfuhr* (drive diversion). Similarly Adler: the inferiority complex is the

source of all actions while at the same time focused on reducing itself through the pursuit of security. To make these different views more understandable, it makes sense to draw on Aristotle's theory of causality.

Aristotle distinguishes four different types of cause, namely 1) material, 2) formal, 3) efficient, and 4) final (Aristotle, 1930, book II, chapter 2–3, 194b; cf. Gloy, 1995, pp. 116–124). This is not the place to further explore the at times controversial issues in Aristotle research (cf. Gloy 1995, 117). Essential in this context is rather that two of the four causes, namely material and final, ended up being of fundamental importance in the further course of the history of science. In the scholastic reception of Thomas Aquinas, the material cause is called *causa efficiens*, and this is the one that has become essential for the scientific notion of causality in the modern era (Thomas Aquinas, 2000, lib. 1 l. 4 n. 2): it is about the question of "whence" and "whither", or, in a modern context, of the relationship between cause and effect. *Vis-à-vis*, the final cause, called *causa finalis* by Thomas (Thomas Aquinas, 2000, lib. 1 l. 4 n. 2), was given a prominent position in the scholastic conception of science. This is due to the predominance of the theological point of view, because from a Christian perspective, the world is considered God's creation and thus the realization of a wise plan, so everything is suspected to have a deeper purpose (Gloy 1995, p. 117).

Thus it should not surprise that with the beginning of the success story of modern science, meaning since the early modern period, the final cause (*causa finalis*) lost more and more of its influence. It was too attached to metaphysics to be used respectably in science, and indeed it is hardly reasonable to ask, for example, for what purpose a ship went down and claimed lives (*causa finalis*), rather than why this happened (*causa efficiens*). But on a human level, the question of final cause or intention is justified, because it, in the words of the philosopher Gregor Schiemann, "follows the example of human action. Humans are able to set objectives and to act in order to achieve these objectives. Their actions are often only understandable when one is aware of the goal that is the desired end result of an action" (Schiemann 1998, p. 3).

However, Schiemann directed his focus on conscious intentionality, which is similar to Franz Brentano, who introduced the term to the psychology of the 19th century (Brentano 1995). It was Adler who first put emphasis on unconscious intentionality. This becomes clear when we read the above mentioned quote from *Understanding Human Nature* again and remember that "every spiritual life begins with a more or less deep sense of inferiority" that is "the driving force" behind achieving a goal we hope will provide security (Adler 1927a, p. 72).

The goal-oriented aspect of human activity is closely linked with the lifestyle as another central notion of individual psychology and as a holistic phenomenon. Erwin Wexberg writes in his introduction to individual psychology that every living organism differs from inanimate matter

in that it forms a cohesive unit. While one could take away half the stones from a pile of stones without anything changing about the fact that one was looking at a pile of stones except for the number of stones, an organism could not simply be split because it was indivisible, or "individual"; otherwise it would be dead matter. Accordingly, one might also view a house as nothing but an accumulation of dead matter, if one looked at it from the perspective of someone who knew no houses, such as a cave-dweller, for example. For someone like that, the meaning of *"the building in ruins [is] nothing less and nothing other than the intact building. For us as house-dwellers though, the house has meaning, because we have given this pile of inanimate matter a purpose. Thus, for us the house has a kind of life, though naturally a life that we have breathed into it. And because it is organized in the sense of this borrowed animation, it appears to us as a whole"* (Wexberg, 1928, pp. 12–13).

Thus, the purpose or the meaning is a holistic phenomenon, and in that this is also true for the lifestyle. The quote also reveals why natural science has distanced itself from the concept of purpose: it is a peculiarly human phenomenon and not or hardly applicable in subhuman areas (Spaemann & Löw, 1981), but it is a central concept in philosophical anthropology.

Adler himself established the intentional or teleological principle also on a philosophical basis in his magnum opus *The Neurotic Character*, by falling back on the fictionalism that the neo-kantian Hans Vaihinger developed in his postdoctoral thesis (Habilitationsschrift) *The Philosophy of 'As If'* (Vaihinger 1924). This is an early constructivist theory that focuses on the concept of fiction and defines it as a deliberately chosen assumption, which is different from the reality and partially self-contradictory. One must pretend, though, as if one could adequately recognize reality, because it is only conceivable under this condition. The function of epistemology thus could not be in the representation of reality. Instead, its benefits were determined by practical usefulness; it was therefore a tool to negotiate reality. An illustrative example is the division of the globe in lines of longitude and latitude. These do not actually exist, but when people act as if they were real, it becomes easier to navigate.

Adler transfers those thoughts to psychology by looking at the inferiority complex with its *"inherent feelings of displeasure and dissatisfaction"* as the starting point and inner drive for *"getting closer to a fictional ultimate goal. The schema the child uses in order to be able to act and find their way around is general and corresponds to the insistence of the human mind to capture the chaotic, flowing, incomprehensible, and bind it into a solid shape by way of unreal assumptions, fictions, in order to calculate it."* (Adler 1912a, p. 70–71; cf. Rattner 1987; Rieken 1996; Rieken 2006).

Adler's psychology is therefore shaped by subjectivism, constructivism, and hermeneutics as it traces back our world view to fictions that arise from the interactive entanglement of feelings of inferiority and compensatory efforts. As such he is "an avantgardist of the, as it is called today, 'postmodern consciousness'; much more than Freud and Jung were, who voted for the

objective character of the concept 'psyche' and offer us metapsychological systems of hypotheses," writes Jungian analyst James Hillman in his award-winning work *Healing Fiction* (Hillman 1983//1986, p. 153 [German edition]). However, Adler is not a radical constructivist, because in his opinion there are fictions that are closer to reality and those that are further removed. The scale is related to the spectrum between relative mental health and illness, and so it should not surprise that the third chapter of the theoretical part of his *Neurotic Character* is titled "The accentuated fiction as guiding idea in the neurosis" (Adler 1912a, pp. 41; emphasis added, B.R.).

But fictionalism refers to something else as well, namely to the fact that we can never fully achieve our goals and are faced with life-long shortcomings. "The emotional balance is continually threatened" (Adler 1933b, p. 55), because "to be a human being means to possess a feeling of inferiority which constantly presses towards its own conquest" (Adler 1933b, p. 56). An idea of man focused on deficits may also be found in Freud and Jung, but shortcomings are at the center of Adler's theories, in the form of an urgent desire for "healing" or "redemption" on the one hand and, on the other hand, as a feeling of painful insufficiency (cf. Hillman 1986, p. 135). This applies to patients or teaching analysts who begin therapy full of hope and have to accept at the end that they were less successful than they originally desired, as well as for therapists when they take a critical look at themselves and their work.

In summary, let us put on record that Adler stands on psycho-dynamic ground in terms of his theoretical foundation as he pays great attention to childhood and the unconscious with all its conflictual dynamics. However, alternative scientific theories have a higher priority than in psychoanalysis, because the latter is primarily rooted in the analytical thinking of the effective cause, while individual psychology considers the final cause as well as a holistic approach (lifestyle) in addition to the effective cause.

Finally, a few remarks on technique (cf. Rieken, Sindelar & Stephenson 2011, pp. 203–265): it is roughly equivalent to modern psychoanalytic approaches, because the relationship aspect (need for affection, social interest, social equality) intersects well especially with current object relationship theories (i.e., Mann 1997), or the view that the life story is not only reconstructed, but is also constructed (constructivism or fictionalism), and is highly compatible with relational psychoanalysis (i.e., Mitchell 1997). Accordingly, the analyst is usually less abstinent than in classical psychoanalysis, but certainly not as active as in the North American individual psychology. There, therapies also take place exclusively in the chair-chair setting, while in German individual psychology, the chair-couch setting is used as well and is in fact as common there as in psychoanalysis. Also, attention is paid to whether the patient is someone with neurotic conflict potential or whether the dysfunction is structural. In addition, other focal points are not only the analysis of transference but also of countertransference, and, if necessary, the communication of feelings of countertransference, insofar as this is considered beneficial for the process.

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