

Gisela Eife

The Development of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology

Theory of Personality, Psychopathology,
Psychotherapy (1912–1937)





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References

The Collected Clinical Works of Alfred Adler
Alfred Adler Studienausgabe (Study Edition)
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Preface

This book is a revised edition of my introduction to the third volume of the German Alfred Adler Study Edition¹ “Persönlichkeitstheorie, Psychopathologie, Psychotherapie” (Adler, 2010). A new chapter has been added: “The relational dimension of Individual Psychology”.

The starting point of Alfred Adler’s psychotherapeutic theory is well documented in his major work “The Neurotic Character” (Adler/Stein, 1912a/2002a)². The further elaboration is made accessible particularly in the third volume (Adler, 2010a) of the German Alfred Adler Study Edition and in Henry Stein’s “The Collected Clinical Works of Alfred Adler” (Volume 1-9). Substantial aspects can also be taken from “Der Sinn des Lebens” (Adler, 1933b). In summary, the following concepts present the essentials of the development of Adler’s theory: the compensation of inferiority feeling and the concept of community feeling anchored in emotional experience, in body and mind and in the philosophy of life.

Many influences, impulses and stimulations contributed to the production of this book. I would like to thank all my colleagues who encouraged my individual psychological development. Conversations with my partner, a psychoanalyst and a researcher of Master Eckhart’s writings, Karl Heinz Witte, enriched and inspired me. I myself have translated the German version of this e-book and owe heartfelt thanks to Caroline Murphy for her supervising and correcting my English. Also, I want to thank Corina Gogalniceanu, Erik Mansager, a Classical Adlerian

Depth Psychotherapist (CADP), and Paola Prina-Cerai, a member of the editorial board of the UK Adlerian Year Book, for their interest and support. And finally, I want to thank my lector Ulrike Rastin for her kind cooperation and helpfulness.

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- 1 Starting in 2007, an Alfred Adler Study Edition has been published in German, edited by Karl Heinz Witte.
 - 2 Starting in 2002, a new English translation of Adler's writings has been published in English, edited by Henry Stein. Most of Adler's quotations are taken from Stein's edition; a few quotations are only published in the German Study Edition. The small letter behind the year of publication is part of the German classification of Adler's papers.

The Dual Dynamic: the Core of Adler's Theory

Adler's theory discusses the modality whereby the human being masters his or her³ life in the world. He sees the life of the individual as well as that of the masses as a "compensation process, attempting to overcome felt or alleged 'inferiorities' in a physical or psychological manner" (Adler/Stein, 1937g, p. 215).

For Adler, the feeling of inferiority is "a chance and necessity for the human being, the onset, the impetus for human development" (Adler, 1926k, p. 258)⁴. It is a "stimulus" (Adler, 1933l, p. 568)⁵ and an "incentive" (Adler, 1926k, p. 258) for the compensation process, the striving for a goal of security and superiority. Thus, Adler bases his concept of neurosis in a higher-ranking motive, that is the *goal-orientation* of the human being, instead of a partial motive (Libido) or a system of several motives.

At the beginning, Adler called this compensation process the "life plan", starting in 1926, he used the term "life style". As a result of his experience during the First World War, in which he felt the lack of a common ground for humanity, Adler introduced the term *community feeling*⁶ in 1918.

The introduction of community feeling manifests a change in the development of Adler's theory. He discovered that psychic health cannot be achieved by a correction of psychic disorders. A patient's health depends on the degree of his or her community feeling. Since the introduction of

community feeling Adler's theory is a value psychology, community feeling serves as a corrective and a criterion.

In 1918, Adler also realized a "dual relatedness" of Dostoyevsky's heroes: "Our feeling of dual personality [Adler uses dual relatedness]⁷ is inherent in every character and fixed on two points that we can sense. Every Dostoyevsky hero moves assuredly in an area that, on the one hand, is limited by an isolated heroism, within which the hero transforms himself into a wolf and, on the other hand, the hero is contained behind a line drawn by Dostoyevsky where there is love of one's fellow human beings. This dual personality [dual relatedness] gives strength and security to his characters and anchors them firmly in our minds and feelings" (Adler/Stein, 1918c, p. 121). "Countering his demand for power [...] is the experience of the overwhelming necessity for the community's aspirations" (Adler/Stein, 1918h, p. 132).

Each character is related to two fixed points in which Adler sees the contrast: isolated heroism versus brotherly love. These two tendencies in human life resemble Melanie Klein's concept of the depressive and paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1944/1975, p. 317), but for Adler these concepts gain a foundation in his philosophy of life.

At the moment when Raskolnikov changes from one relatedness to another, "he wants to cross the line laid down by his life thus far, fashioned on the basis of his social feeling and his life experiences" (Adler/Stein, 1918h, p. 115). This line can be a turning point of the life-movement, a way out of the compensation dynamic into a life determined by community feeling. Adler did not pursue these thoughts at that time. Not before 1929 did he coin the term "dual dynamic" for these two tendencies in human life. He never gave a definition, but many thoughts went in this direction in his investigation of human life (see chapter 3).